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Source: Research, Policy and Planning Department, CBL.

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Was Boakai blindfolded?



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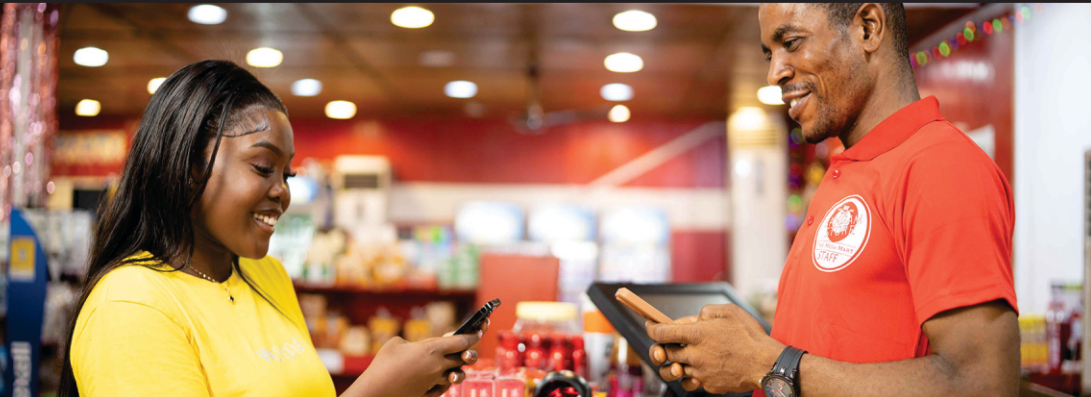
-Weah urges incoming UP-led administration

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Continental News

Don't crowdfund for abducted sisters' ransom - Nigeria

Nigeria's defence minister has hit out at those paying ransoms to kidnappers, saying crowdfunding makes it

back home. All of them [the family] are just praying," Asiya Adamu, a cousin to the sisters, told BBC Hausa on Wednesday. There has been no word from

demands only made them more greedy.

"On crowdfunding, we all know there's an existing law against payment of ransom. So, it is very sad for people to go over the internet, radio asking for donations to pay ransom. This will only worsen the situation," he said. In this case it had made the kidnappers increase their demands, the minister said. "We believe we have to stop - as painful as it is. We have to stop responding to payment on ransom. If we stop, over time the kidnapping will not be profitable and they will stop." Kidnapping has become rife in Nigeria, with hundreds of people abducted in recent years, largely by criminal gangs who see it as an easy way to make money. It has been particularly bad in the north-west of the country.

There has been an outcry that the insecurity has reached the capital, prompting Abuja's police force to launch a special squad to tackle the kidnapping gangs on Wednesday.

Mr Abubakar said he believed operations against the gangs elsewhere had forced them to move to areas near the capital. "The security agencies are working very hard to push them out and block the movements and finish them off once and for all." BBC



Nabeeha, pictured second from left, was killed by the kidnappers last Friday

worse. Mohammed Badaru Abubakar's comments come as a deadline to pay a ransom for the release of five sisters expired. They were abducted from their home earlier this month in the capital, Abuja, along with another of their sisters who was later killed.

The case has shocked the country and people have been donating to a crowdfunding initiative.

"We are anxious, everyone is waiting. We just want them

the family since the deadline expired. BBC Africa Live: Updates from the continent The six sisters, aged from the early teens to 23, were taken hostage in the Abuja suburb of Bwari along with their father Mansoor Al-Kadriyar, who was later released to raise the ransom. His 21-year-old daughter, Nabeeha, a final year university student, was killed last Friday as a warning that the huge ransom be paid.

But Mr Abubakar said responding to the kidnappers'

Chinese Tourism to South Africa Up, But Visas a Barrier

With its rolling wine lands, picturesque coasts and iconic wildlife, South Africa is a prime destination for international tourists, but industry experts say the government needs to work on attracting more visitors from one massive market: China. Arrivals from China were up in the first 11 months of 2023 thanks to the Asian giant's reopening and new direct flight routes, said Thandiwe Mathibela, a spokeswoman for South African Tourism, the tourism marketing arm of the South African government.

"China saw a massive 215.7% surge, amounting to 34,669 arrivals. The reopening of the Chinese market and the initiation of direct flight routes have catalyzed a resurgence in arrivals, highlighting the vast potential and significance of

attracting Chinese tourists," Rosemary Anderson, chairperson of the national trade association for the hospitality industry, FEDHASA, told VOA. "South Africa must streamline its visa process to fully capitalize on the vast potential of the Chinese tourism market. The nuances of this key market, such as a penchant for guided group travel, necessitate extensive support throughout the trip," she said.

Solutions could include either a visa exemption for Chinese nationals, or introducing a visa-on-arrival system, she said. "South Africa is popular with the Chinese market due to its rich cultural and natural assets. ... Streamlining the visa process is critical to retain Chinese travel to South Africa and prevent further loss to competitor countries," Anderson noted.

Kenya, Zimbabwe and many other African countries that also offer attractions like wildlife



A woman walks in Cyrildene, also known as Johannesburg's Chinatown, South Africa

Somalia's Frontline Women Journalists Face Multiple Risks

In early January 2017, journalist Shukri Aden Hussein received an anonymous call, conveying an order. "Leave the government station," the caller told her. "It's not a shame to be a journalist but go and work for the other local stations in the town," the caller added. Hussein, 27, said she knew who called her.

"The people who make the phone calls called me - I mean al-Shabab," she said.

It has been documented that al-Shabab militants send threatening phone calls to journalists to influence their coverage, and to business owners to extort money from them.

Hussein said she did not take the call seriously initially, but things got real after a second phone call about a month later, while she was walking in the town center, in a busy area.

"We see where you are walking; consider yourself lucky if you make it to your home safe," the caller said. Hussein said she has never been that scared. She came

home "sweating."

"That night I was taken from our house; I slept [at] a relative family's house; the next morning, I moved out to a safer area." Hussein has not been covering political and security issues at all. She chose to cover mostly social issues - health, education, sports and business - it's what her family and some of her listeners encouraged her to do. But what bothered the al-Shabab caller is her association with the regional government-run radio station, Radio Southwest, where she started her journalism career.

Shukri Ismail Ahmed does cover humanitarian affairs including security issues. But she says she treads cautiously. The al-Shabab militant group has been blockading several towns for a long time as a punishment for supporting the government. The militant group has been attacking any persons, vehicles or donkeys smuggling food and goods into the besieged towns.

One of those towns is Huddur in the Southwest Bakool region where Ahmed was assigned to file a report.



Journalists from the Somali women-led newsroom Bilan are seen on assignment

this market to South African tourism," she told VOA. But Chinese visitors to South Africa still make up a very small share of overall foreign arrivals. From January of last year until November, around 8 million tourists traveled to South Africa, according to government figures. Tourists from the United States, United Kingdom and Germany accounted for the most visitors.

"Led by our minister of tourism, we continue to seek ways to make South Africa even more accessible to the Chinese visitors who want to come visit South Africa to experience our rich culture and heritage," Mathibela said. Industry experts as well as the government acknowledge that South Africa's visa system remains a major hindrance. Chinese who want to visit the country have to apply for a visa in advance and critics say the process is time-consuming and opaque. "Our current visa system is not warm, welcoming or easy to navigate in

safaris are either visa-free or offer visa-on-arrival for Chinese visitors.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa stressed the importance of the tourism sector ahead of last year's summit in Johannesburg of the BRICS group of emerging nations, which includes both China and South Africa, and a state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping. "South African Tourism expects that inbound Chinese tourism will recover to pre-COVID levels by 2026. We will be actively promoting our country as a tourism destination for Chinese tourists. ... It is encouraging that direct flights between South Africa and China are increasing," he said.

Currently there are only direct flights between Johannesburg and China's capital of Beijing or manufacturing hub Shenzhen, operated by Air China, but South African Airways is reportedly working on restarting flights too. In November, Tourism Minister Patricia De Lille told Bloomberg she would like to see visa requirements for Chinese short-term visitors waived or eased.

EDITORIAL

VP Taylor's cry over spilled milk

OUTGOING VICE President Jewel Howard-Taylor's recent disclosure of treatments received in the Coalition government of President George Manneh Weah that she serves for six years is nothing but crying over spilled milk. How could a woman of her status allow herself to have suffered such psychological humiliation without speaking out!

YET, SHE WAS bold enough to come in public defending the CDC and repeatedly criticizing the opposition, including former Vice President now President-elect, Joseph Nyumah Boakai, for performing dismally under Madam Sireaf. Such political decent boomeranged.

Madam Taylor took the National Patriotic Party (NPP) to President Weah's Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) in a coalition that offered her the Vice Presidential slot during the 2017 election, but received cold shoulders after the CDC came to power.

In the entire first year or so of the administration, she did not report for work in the Senate where she presided as President, because the Executive Mansion withdrew her official aids and motorcade amid claims and fears in the ruling party that she wanted to out shine President Weah. It took public pressure to have her amenities restored.

Appearing as guest on a live online talk show recently, the Vice President lamented that she never had access to the inner cycle of the Weah administration despite being the second in command, while her value in terms of education and experience was downplayed in the government. How does this gain attention of the public when she is already on her way out to give way to a new administration?

The Coalition for Democratic Change lost the 14th November 2023 Presidential Runoff Election to the Unity Party, clearly thwarting President Weah's bid for second term in office.

But for the woman, who once served as First Lady of the Republic of Liberia before her election as Vice President to have endured such humiliation for six long years in total silence, is not only a serious disappointment to herself, but disappointment to Liberian women aspiring for public office.

By her revelation, Madam Taylor clearly indicates that she was completely sidelined. No wonder why cries for jobs from within the NPP faction that headed went unheeded because she had no influence on President Weah or key officials to push her interest, and could not say so publicly.

"Certain point in time I was blocked; I was no longer part of the team. In 2016-2017, I was part of the team; we sat at the roundtable to talk and he (President Weah) will asked me at the end of everybody's conversation to talk, 'Deputy S.B., what you say' and I always had the chance to speak my mind."

But she observed that subsequently, all this changed, and she was increasingly ostracized in the Coalition, lamenting "That disunity of not communicating and consulting actually ate into the fabric of me. If I could look back, I will say that was the hardest part for me. As a woman, you know, we like to talk. And so, I always wanted the opportunity to talk about some of the things that were happening. And I always wanted to say that President Weah and I had never had an argument, a face-to-face argument; never."

Coming out now at the eleventh hour is, as it is often said in a Liberian parlance, "water under the bridge" that makes no significant relevance at the moment. All that is before her now is to move on with her life after January 22nd.

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+231-775407211 Managing Editor: Othello B. Garblah: Editor-In-Chief: Jonathan K. Browne

COMMENTARY

By Daron Acemoglu

What It Takes to Build Democratic Institutions

BOSTON - There are plenty of good models around to help both developing and industrialized countries build better democratic institutions. But with its abortive attempts to draft a new constitution, Chile is offering a lesson in what to avoid.

Though it is one of the richest countries in Latin America, Chile is still suffering from the legacy of General Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship and historic inequalities. The country has made some progress in building democratic institutions since the 1988 plebiscite that began the transition from authoritarianism, and education and social programs have reduced income inequality. But major problems remain. There are deep inequalities not just in income, but also in access to government services, high-quality educational resources, and labor-market opportunities. Moreover, Chile still has the constitution that Pinochet imposed in 1980.

Yet while it seems natural to start anew, Chile has gone about it the wrong way. Following a 2020 referendum that showed overwhelming support for drafting a new constitution, it entrusted the process to a convention of elected delegates. But only 43% of voters turned out for the 2021 election to fill the convention, and many of the candidates were from far-left circles with strong ideological commitments to draft a constitution that would crack down on business and establish myriad new rights for different communities. When the resulting document was put to a vote, 62% of Chileans rejected it.

A second attempt repeated the same failings, only from the other direction. A right-wing convention majority, emboldened by the public's reaction to the first version, drafted a constitution that also was rejected as a step too far. This experience should sound familiar, because Chile is hardly the only country where an activist body has pushed for measures that a majority of voters oppose. Similar episodes are occurring around the world - not least in the United States - and trust in institutions is suffering as a result.

Can support for democracy be rebuilt? My own recent work with Nicolás Ajzenman, Cevat Aksoy, Martin Fiszbein, and Carlos Molina may provide some clues. We find that people who have experience with democratic institutions tend to support them, but only if they deem democracies to be successful in delivering the kinds of economic performance, public services, and other outcomes that they expect.

What people appear to want from democracies is telling. Support for democracy wanes during economic crises, wars, or other periods of instability, and improves when the public enjoys the benefits of good public services, low inequality, and limited to no corruption. The lessons seem clear. If we want to build a better democracy, we must start with democratic institutions' ability to deliver what people want.

With inequality rising in many countries and global corporations becoming more powerful, it is reasonable for democracies to offer more redistribution and stronger protections for disadvantaged groups. But, again, the right and the left will go about this in different ways.

In Chile's case, the left's hardline anti-business

agenda seems ill-advised. A better alternative is the model pioneered by Scandinavia's social democratic parties, which rose to power after the 1929 stock-market crash and the Great Depression, when there was a palpable need for major institutional changes and policies to restore the economy to health and curb inequality.

There are many misperceptions about the origins of Nordic social democracy. While some commentators seem to believe that these countries were always predisposed toward equality and cooperation, others view them as "democratic socialist" role models. Neither perception seems to be true. Both Sweden and Norway were highly unequal at the beginning of the twentieth century. Norway's pre-tax income Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality on a scale of zero to one) was 0.57 in 1930, which means that it was more unequal than anywhere in Latin America today.

Both countries also experienced frequent industrial conflict. The workers' parties that later became social-democratic parties were rooted in Marxism. But by the time they came to power, they had started moving away from their earlier commitments to revolution and rigid ideology. Instead, they campaigned under a broad umbrella, promising sound macroeconomic management and egalitarian reform of the labor market and education.

For its part, the Norwegian Labour Party made its U-turn from a hardline Marxist agenda after its poor showing in Norway's 1930 election. Like Danish and Swedish workers' parties at the time, it redirected its focus to more practical matters, implementing policies that people wanted. The party also promised a major educational reform to improve the quality of schooling in rural areas that were falling behind. After coming to power again in 1935, the party moved quickly to implement its "Folk School Law" the following year.

In recent work with Tuomas Pekkarinen, Kjell Salvanes, and Matti Sarvimäki, we show that Norway's school reform did more than improve the quality of rural schooling. It also had a profound effect on Norwegian politics, because many of those who benefited from the reform (starting with parents) shifted their allegiances to the Labour Party, thus helping to create the coalition that would sustain Norway's now-famous model of social democracy. Simply put, the party provided the services voters wanted, and voters rewarded it with electoral support.

The Swedish case is broadly similar. After its first election victory in 1932, the Swedish Social Democratic Party delivered on its promise of higher wages, industrial peace, and a stable macroeconomic environment. It was then rewarded at the polls for the next several decades.

There are lessons here for those who want to strengthen democracy and build new institutions to combat inequality and protect the disadvantaged. The first step must be to show that democracy works by forging a reformist agenda that will succeed in delivering services to the population. Attempts to impose extremist policies (of the left or right) on voters are doomed to fail - and are likely to reduce trust in democratic institutions even further.

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Lord, it look leh the chicken has come home to roast

By Othello B. Garblah

Dear Father,
Hmm, I say it na easy. They say the Papy na start flexing him muscle small, small. But they say da na smal chakala he press oo.

They say the Papy look at the short lawyer the orlor day and told the man, I want you to forget about being Paramount Chief at the Traditional Council because that place for my son. You say whatin?

Oh, da fire! You na hear nothing yet. You think the Papy coming be playing around here? He told the man, to find something else to do, but he mon consider him request.

My son, you want tell me the Papy na sit down good, good yea, he na start fighting already?

Oh, yor think becus yor see the man walking slow, slow like da he na geh heart eh. But newsflash: That Papy geh heart, you na here easy water run deep? Go ask my brother "Man Can't Talk All" and him father. SO, what the short lawyer told him na?

Aah, Father, da it you asking slow leh da. The man told him plain no! You say whatin?

Father, I say, the man said plain no. At least da wah the chey, chey poly them told me. Bor you, yor self ya, you na know we the short people our temper right to our figure tip eh.

Bor, who will do that kina thing self. You na spend all yor money and time practicing whole month, time for the game then somebody from yor opposite camp say, you mon na play becus he wan him son to take the glory-awa.

The Papy will balance, he jus starting. He na even know who him playing with sef.

Anyway, leh talk so and talk so too na, what the short man too go to the Papy him play. He na know if the Papy na talk this one here, him people will say him be betrayer?

Ehn han, da somer the thing there too my son. The man suppose to wait when he fini winning na then he go speak to the Papy. Bor, him too, him na do so that him also cause him own problem.

Hmm, bor the way that short lawyer too leh power and know how to play, the Papy mon fight hard oo, becus the way him na throw the first punch in that brabee eye, he mon jus know say the man will soon start fighting back.

Bor, the Papy too ya. If you na wan see the man, you couldn't jus tell him for him na to waste him time, aye mehn.

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OPINION

By Zhang Jun

Has China's Economy Peaked?

SHANGHAI - The narrative that China's economy is nearing its peak - or has already reached it - has taken hold in Western media. But if you read the doomsayers' analyses carefully, you will find that many of the reasons they give for their bleak assessments are not new. On the contrary, they tend to highlight precisely the same challenges that economists and commentators have been harping on for at least a decade or longer. If China was not sputtering then, why should we believe it is now?

To be sure, the global context has changed. Perhaps most important, the prevailing narrative about China has turned largely negative, and the West is now far more hostile toward it than it was ten or even five years ago. With the United States working harder than ever to contain China, direct Chinese exports to the US have fallen.

Even so, the "decoupling" of the world's two largest economies is probably overstated. A recent study by University of California San Diego economist Caroline Freund and her colleagues shows that the US and China are indeed reducing their engagement in some areas. For example, US import growth from China lagged well behind US import growth from other countries for products subject to US tariffs.

But the same study also found that US and Chinese supply chains remain deeply intertwined, especially for "strategic products." Moreover, the countries from which US imports are growing are often deeply - and increasingly - embedded in Chinese supply chains. In fact, countries seeking to displace China in US supply chains have been increasing their own imports from China, especially in strategic industries.

At the same time, global firms appear to be pursuing a "China+1" strategy, investing in other countries in addition to - but not instead of - China. Chinese companies, for their part, have increased their foreign direct investment in recent years and deployed their own production chains far beyond China's borders, especially to countries that can avoid punitive US tariffs. This trend is likely to persist, ensuring that Chinese capital continues to flow to the rest of the world.

The doomsayers would likely point out that China is also facing domestic challenges. Beyond unfavorable demographics, China is also grappling with issues like large debts, misallocation of capital, severe pollution, and a troubled property sector. But China's government has been clearly aware of these problems - and committed to addressing them - for a decade.

China's program of "supply-side structural reform," for instance, took shape in 2015 and included tighter financial regulations and increased government supervision of - and intervention in - highly leveraged sectors with excess production capacity. While the program helped to prevent a debt or financial crisis, it also constrained growth in many highly leveraged industries, such as real estate. But the view that a sluggish property sector will trigger China's economic collapse is overly dramatic.

Chinese policymakers understand that a transition is inevitable in the real-estate sector, and are committed to ensuring that it occurs smoothly. More broadly, the structural reforms that have already been implemented have boosted China's economic resilience, and, despite US tariffs, Chinese exports have remained robust. Meanwhile, new sectors - from services to the digital economy and high-tech industries - have been growing fast.

All of this helps to explain why China achieved 6.6% three-year-average growth in 2017-19. While the COVID-19 pandemic slashed growth in 2020, the economy rebounded strongly in 2021, growing at a rate of 8.1%. And the growth rate in 2023 is most likely to be slightly over 5%; even a round of lockdowns in 2022 did not prevent growth.

This does not mean that China emerged from the pandemic unscathed. Three years of reduced opportunities to generate income limited Chinese consumers' ability to fuel a rapid post-pandemic recovery. The government must now redouble its efforts to support domestic demand and job creation by pursuing more expansionary monetary and fiscal policies over the next two years.

Chinese policymakers must also work to accelerate the liberalization of some industries. For example, productive services where private and foreign capital is barred from entering must be freed of these restrictions as soon as possible. Fortunately, there are signs that the authorities are aware of this imperative: financial regulators just granted a bank-card-clearing license to the US firm Mastercard. China also unilaterally introduced visa-free entry for six countries - including France, Germany, and Italy - last month.

Nobody expected China to sustain double-digit growth forever. Capital accumulation was always going to slow, and the early dividend generated from structural drivers of growth were always going to weaken. Now, economic growth will require higher shares of spending on household consumption, rather than on investment.

That is why China's government is expected urgently to reduce the share of investment in GDP and support household consumption, such as through income transfers and stronger welfare programs (which would enable households to reduce precautionary savings). This will create a prosperous domestic market, encourage the expansion of the service industry, and support the shift to sustainable growth.

China's economy has not exhausted its development potential, nor has it matured to the point that it has lost its vitality. While the economy's current status has made rebalancing possible, it also opens a time window for China's leadership to commit to carrying out structural reform. Certainly, growth has been slowing down and the global context has changed, creating a sense of urgency. But this is likely to work in the country's favor, accelerating the structural reforms that its emerging growth model needs.

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Police release regulations

Support people with Down syndrome

-ahead of Monday's inaugural program

By Kruah Thompson
In preparation for the scheduled JNB and JKK inauguration ceremony on Monday, January 22, 2023, the Liberia National Police (LNP) has outlined several

Col. Sackor added that all travelers will be required to display their passports for road access. Speaking at the Ministry of Information, Culture Affairs and Tourism's regular press

officers directing traffic. Moreover, Col. Sackor warns against any violation of traffic regulations, emphasizing that strict enforcement measures will be in place. "We are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all participants and spectators. Any disregard for traffic rules will be dealt with firmly," he states.

At the same time he calls on local businesses and organizations to cooperate with law enforcement authorities in facilitating the implementation of traffic regulations. This collaborative effort, he emphasizes, is crucial for the overall success of managing traffic during the inauguration.

As the city gets ready for this momentous occasion, the Police assure the public that law enforcement agencies are working tirelessly to create a secure environment, and that anyone without access pass will not be allowed around the facility where the program will be held.

He calls on uninvited persons to stay at home, as the event will be broadcast live on local and international news outlets in and around the country, further advising the public to stay informed through official channels for updates on



Col. Melvin Sackor

security measures to be observed during the celebration. Deputy Inspector General (IG) of Police for Operations, Col. Melvin Sackor, says the measures are to guarantee the seamless flow of vehicles, upholding public safety and stringent security measures to ensure VVIPs [Very, Very Important Personalities] who will come to grace the occasion have a smooth access to roads leading to the facility where the program will be held.

briefing on Thursday, January 18, 2024, the Deputy IG emphasized that these regulations, as per his guidance, encompass designated routes, road closures, and parking restrictions around the inauguration venue. He also highlights that there will be a deployment of extra traffic personnel to handle the heightened vehicle flow on inauguration day; encouraging motorists to be patient and adhere to the instructions provided by law enforcement

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

-Outgoing Minister Zeogar Wilson

By Lewis S. Teh
Outgoing Youth and Sports Minister D. Zeogar Wilson, is urging the incoming administration of President-elect Joseph N. Boakai through the 55th Legislature to allot sufficient budgetary support to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protect to cater to the needs of people with Down syndrome.

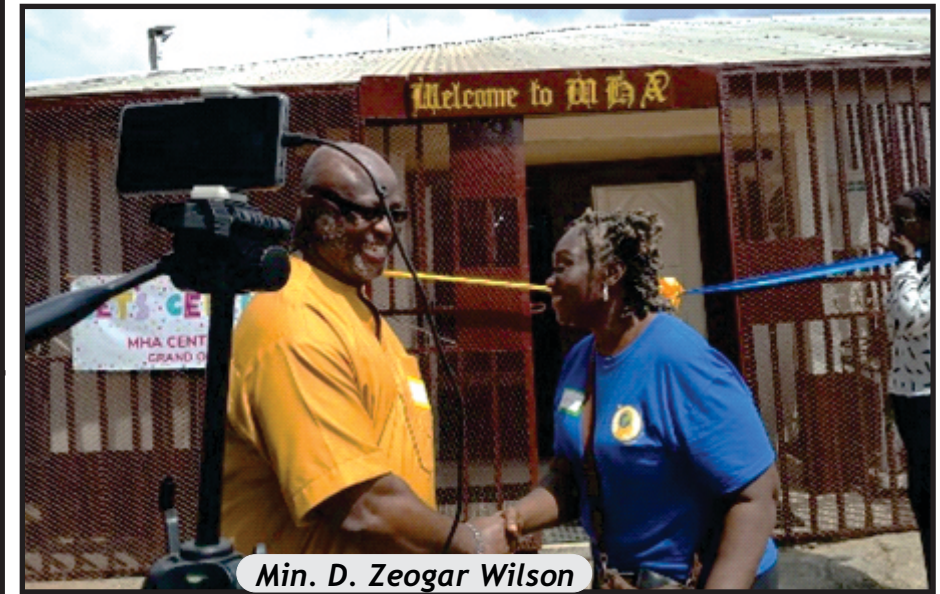
"It is sad that our country doesn't take this population seriously. I pray and hope that what we didn't do in our government, the next government can make enough budgetary appropriation to the Ministry of Gender budget line that focuses on this so that they can provide the needed services to this population", Minister Wilson said.

The outgoing Minister spoke Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for My Heart's Appeal Center rhar serves

My Heart Appeal (MHA) is a non-profit organization adopted as a charity by the Grand Lodge of Masons Liberia. The charity opened its doors to individuals with Down syndrome and or individuals with intellectual disabilities in 2011 when its executive director Lovetie Major, came to Liberia in search of such people with special needs. The goal was to make it easier to provide quality training and career opportunities for disabled teenagers and adults in West Africa.

The charity's key goals include creating a safe campus in Liberia for teens and adults with intellectual disabilities to train and make them productive thru educating the public about the many skills and capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities, and assisting with the cost of furthering the education of the mind, moderately disabled teens and adults in West Africa.

Since 2011, the home has been a haven for these individuals,



Min. D. Zeogar Wilson

people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He wants the new government to prioritize such deformity thru adequate budgetary support. "For more of the 18 years that I lived in the United States, I worked with this population. I know what it is to take care of this population. To take care of this population is difficult and many parents would not want to get involved with their kids, but I am glad that the parents are involved." Wilson, who claimed to be enthusiastic about this group, praised the personnel for their outstanding work and chastised those who disparaged others for what he described as a 'pupu cleaning job.' According to him, this is the sector in which most Liberians in America work and it is not a pupu job as many believe, saying "These people need help, so, don't look down on your friends because of the work they do, because what you do is what puts food on your table and pays your bills."

caring for them and giving them a sense of belonging. "My daughter had always wanted to go to school like normal children and MHA to make that happen," Mary Gessor said. Gessor's daughter is one of the program's oldest students. She stated, "At 26 years old, my daughter was unable to accomplish anything on her own, which affected me.

I had to put my company on hold to care for her, her friends teased her, and she was even turned down by other schools until one day Sister Lovetie came into our town and accepted her into the program, and there has been a significant change."

Gessor's daughter is not the only child benefiting from the program; over the past 14 years, MHA has enrolled 150 children with comparable illnesses for free.

"My son was born in 2012 but he does things that other Down syndrome children cannot do and

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

Sen. Pennue seeks urgent action against drugs

By Ethel A. Tweh
Grand Gedeh County Senator, Zoe Emmanuel Pennue is urging the 55th Legislature, especially the Liberian Senate, to urgently treat the alarming rate of young Liberians categorically called "Zogoes" with emergency in the country.

alarming rate of harmful drug users in the society and ensure that individuals taking on said task be properly qualified to help with the fight against harmful substances.

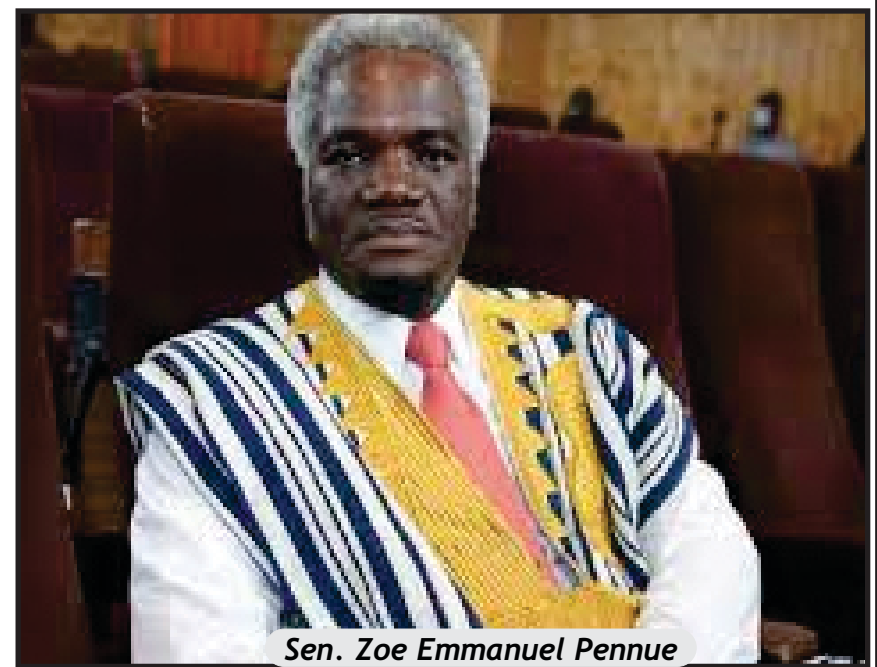
He notes that, as it stands, the LDEA is weak and lacks every capacity to combat the issue of drugs, something, Senator Pennue attributes to the lack of qualified individuals to provide proper

leadership over the entity. In July, 2023, President George M. Weah signed into law the Controlled Drug and Substances Act of 2023, commonly called the Drug Law. The President signed the bill into law after it was passed by the 54th Legislature following months of deliberations.

In spite of the enactment of the Law and subsequent approval by President Weah, Senator Pennue still believes

He says the first action by the Senate should be a vigorous vetting of nominees for the Liberia Drugs Enforcement Agency (LDEA). Numerous reports indicate that Liberia has one of the highest rates of drug use in West Africa with cannabis and heroin being the most used.

Senator Pennue cautions the Senate statutory committee on Defense, Security, Human Rights and Veteran Affairs headed by Lofa County Senator Momo Tarnuekollie Cyrus, to take into account during the vetting process, the



Sen. Zoe Emmanuel Pennue

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Speaker Koffa appoints adhoc committees

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa, has announced the appointment of two crucial adhoc committees for the 55th Legislature: They are, committees on Inauguration and Administration.



Speaker J. Fonati Koffa

The Committee on Inauguration is chaired by Representative Richard Nagbe Koon, and is tasked with collaborating closely with the joint transitional inaugural team from the executive branch to ensure the seamless execution of a

successful inauguration program on the grounds of the Capitol on Monday, January 22, 2024. The committee's responsibilities extend to

coordinating various aspects of the inaugural proceedings, aligning with the joint transitional inaugural team, and contributing to the overall success of this significant event.

Members of the Committee include Rep. Richard Nagbe Koon (Chairman), Rep. Moima Briggs-Mensah (Co-Chair), Rep. Samuel Enders (Member), Rep. Emmanuel Dahn (Member), Rep. Julie F. Wiah (Member),

among others.

At the same time the Committee on Administration is led by Rep. J. Marvin Cole. Its task is finding suitable offices for newly elected lawmakers and managing other administrative matters crucial to the smooth functioning of the legislative body. This committee plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the logistical and administrative needs of the legislators are met efficiently.

Members of the Committee on Administration are: Rep. J. Marvin Cole (Chairman), Rep. P. Mike Jurry (Co-Chair), Rep. Priscilla Cooper (Member), Rep. Bintu Massalley (Member) and Rep. Austin Bliidi Taylor. The terms of the anchor committees, according to House Speaker Koffa will conclude on January 23, 2024. At that time, the Speaker will appoint statutory and other standing committees to continue the essential work of the 55th legislature.

Meanwhile, Speaker Koffa expresses confidence in the capabilities and dedication of the appointed committee members, trusting that they will contribute significantly to the success of the inauguration and the smooth administration of the legislature. Editing by Jonathan Browne

FAO supports Liberia's first digital agriculture census

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations says Quality data in the agricultural sector is vital in informing effective policymaking and accelerating efforts toward sustainable development in Liberia.

In a press release, the FOA says its data collection mission in the country, as part of the Liberia 2022/2023 Census of Agriculture, started on 18 January 2024, which marks the first comprehensive agriculture census in Liberia since the one conducted back in 1970s.

"This year's census uses digital technologies to collect and manage data for the first time, aiming to provide a nationwide impartial, up-to-date agriculture data", the release says.

It says the census activity is being implemented by the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services

related areas.

Preparatory activities for the census had been conducted in 2023, which include training of census data collection staff conducted in December 2023. The actual data collection has been underway and is planned to be completed in March 2024.

The agriculture sector is the primary livelihood of about 40 percent of the population in Liberia (World Bank, 2021) and accounted for about 36 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, 2022). The sector not only provides income for a large portion of households engaged in rice, cassava, rubber, oil palm, cocoa, sugarcane production among others, but also is key to addressing pressing food security and nutrition challenges in the country where nearly 40% of the population suffers from undernourishment as of 2022 (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023).

"Given the critical role the agricultural sector plays in the



(LISGIS) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), while FAO provides technical assistance to the data collection through the 50x2023 Initiative, which promotes evidence-based public policy through the production and use of agricultural data.

The 50x2023 Initiative is in conduction with and is complementary with the activity under the Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West Africa (HISWA) project, funded by the World Bank.

The release says the series of survey activities supported by these projects will generate part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators (i.e. SDG2 and SDG5), Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) indicators, national accounts indicators, among others. Overall, the census activities contribute to the international, regional and national development objectives, addressing and filling the critical data gap in the agricultural sector and the

Liberian economy, it is increasingly important to ensure that high frequency quality data is available to inform policy and accelerate the efforts to reduce poverty," stressed Yakob Seid, Senior Statistician at the FAO Statistics Division and the coordinator for the data production component of the 50x2030 project in Liberia, supervising the census data collection in the field.

"The emphasis will be given to the quality of census data collection to assure that the census data will be used for evidence-based decision making in developing the agricultural sector in Liberia," said Chrislam P. G. Duur, Director and Country Inspector in Margibi County.

The Liberia 2022/2023 Census of Agriculture will generate vital data on the country's agricultural sector that will enable the Liberian government to accelerate its development agenda in the joint efforts towards achieving the sustainable and food-secure world for all.

About the project The 50x2030 Initiative to Close the Agricultural

"Buy From Women" Digital Platform Awareness

Raising to Boost Women's Skills and Products Hits Lofa County

By: Tokpa Tarnue - tarnue82@gmail.com

Voinjama, Lofa Co - As part of efforts to increase awareness of farmers and buyers on the "Buy from Women" Digital Platform or App, two UN Women and Orange Foundation-supported local Farming Cooperatives based in Voinjama on Wednesday December 28, 2023 conducted a day-long awareness-raising in the Voinjama Central Market.

The "Voinjama District Women Organization for Peace and Development Multipurpose Farmers' Cooperative" (VODWOPED) and the "Stand Forever Women Initiative" (SFWI) also based in Voinjama are part of the e-commerce platform, called "Buy from Women", which was launched in 2022. According to UN Women Liberia's National Project Officer, Ms. Aisha Kamara Kolubah, the activity is part of the Digital Inclusion for Women's Economic Empowerment (D4WEE) project that is being

implemented in Bong, Lofa and Nimba Counties by UN Women supported by the Orange Foundation. The project is implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCSP), Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), and the Disaster Management Agency (DMA). The project is leveraging digital inclusion of rural women small holders and entrepreneurs in Liberia, economically empowering them, and enhancing their resilience to disasters. The Buy from Women platform has brought together 3,449 women

farmers from 17 Farming Cooperatives from the project counties. In Lofa, 187 women farmers are making use of the platform to sell and buy agricultural products.

Victoria N. Giddings, Office Assistant at UN Women Liberia, said the initiative links women farmers and entrepreneurs to markets, shares information, and improves their finances/businesses. "Through this internet-based platform, women farmers can sell their produce, including potatoes, pepper, rice, cassava, amongst

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Support people with

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that is because of this organization," Samuel Benedict Yorwue, father of a 13-year-old boy in the program said. He stated that it is disheartening to learn that there is no program at Ministry of Education for children with disabilities, asking, "We have disability

that houses the youngsters. MHA had acquired 0 acres on Robertsfield highway, where it plans to develop a leisure, teacher training, and residential hub for children in the program to live safely for the rest of their lives.

"I don't have a daughter but I have a sister with special

significant task for the institution daily, and they are asking for the cooperation of government, people, embassies, and other interested parties.

"We charter taxi every day to bring the children from their homes here and take them back; it's a tough one. Anthony Dozine, MHA board member. He continues: "We want to start working on purchasing a bus for the kids where we can have them assigned in different locations across Montserrado to bring and take the kids back because they cannot get here like regular students."

Dozine emphasizes the Grand Lodge's dedication to the institution, saying, "When you give your money through this kind of initiative and come to see something like this, you feel happy and want to do more." At the same time, parents of these children join the HMA family in rallying the support of goodwill people to come forward with help.

"The things these people go through are not easy. We need light, vehicles, and food items and so, we are appealing to the government and other people that have the hand to intervene so our children can learn", Mr. Dozine concludes. Editing by Jonathan Browne



institutions, but how is the ministry assisting those institutions." The charity is run on five pillars. A vocational training hub, an early childhood development program for 5-7 years, a special aid program, commercial hub are currently operational. In a completed 15-room facility

needs; I take time off to do what I am doing for our children; what if I am not around what happens to our children," said Madam Lovetie Major, Executive Director of the charity.

However, there is a significant hindrance to the MHA work. Facilitating the children's movements is a

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Police release regulations

traffic regulations leading up to and on the day of the inauguration. Meanwhile, the Police are urging citizens to report any suspicious activities on the following number: 0770800102 and cooperate with authorities for a smooth and incident-free inauguration.

Additionally, the Deputy Commissioner of Police for Public Safety says while the inauguration event will be held on Monday, there are additional programs to follow.

He explains that today, Friday, will be an

intercessory program on Benson Street, with roadblocks set up on Benson, Carey, and Meclin streets, respectively as well as around Perry and Newport Streets intersection, UN Drive, and Meclin Street to ensure VIPs have clear access and safe parking spaces. On Saturday, he adds that activities are planned at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium in Central Monrovia and the SKD Sports Complex in Paynesville to be followed by an intercessory service Sunday at the Bethel Baptist Church on AB Tolbert Road, with roadblocks

extending to Duport Road Junction up to Paynesville City. Meanwhile, the Police Chief of Traffic reveals that officers have been deployed at every checkpoint across Montserrado County to ensure security and a peaceful inaugural program. "Approval for drones and long-distance cameras during the inauguration will be handled exclusively by the EPS [Executive Protection Service] and no media person or individuals will be allowed for the program without a pass," the Traffic Chief maintains.

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Sen. Pennue seeks urgent

that said law can only be significant if the LDEA is robust on the frontline to ensure that violators are apprehended and made to face the full weight of the law without fear or favor.

The new anti-drug law aims to regulate, restrict, control, limit, or eradicate

the illegal export and importation as well as the flagrant use, abuse and proliferation of narcotic substances within Liberia. Pennue laments that the health sector in South-eastern Liberia continues to experience consistent lack of medicines and ambulances to

take patients from one destination to another.

He along with other Lawmakers are making frantic efforts to ensure there are national efforts to rescue the nation's youth from drugs. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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This is laudable and worthy

the level of underdeveloped countries of which they find themselves. The renovation process at the Foreign Ministry which includes modernized offices on First, Second and Third Floors, cars packing lot, three elevators and an entire wireless basement on each floor, among others. President Weah, during the dedicatory ceremony in excitement rain praises on Minister Kemayan and his team for observing the Public Procurement Policy Concession Commission during the renovation process at the ministry. In response, Kemayah names reform and transformation as his greatest achievement since entering government in October 6, 2020 up to date.

Minister Kemayan points that reform at the Foreign Ministry, including the passport department which has been revised with both Diplomatic and general passports now valid for six years, rather than five years previously. He says under his regime as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he has institutionalized reform as key to the transformation of the Ministry, while embarking on the closure

of 'black market' in the ministry. Providing an overview of the project, Deputy Foreign Minister for Administration, and Project Coordinator, Thelma E. Duncan Sawyer, said the ceremony demonstrated that Kemayah is a man of vision, who has not only replicated but clearly executed the vision and blueprint of President Weah, as an excellent leader. Minister Sawyer said the dedication of the refurbished building was key in making the Ministry of Foreign Affairs number one, while expressing gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Morocco for generously funding the project.

Mr. John S. Youboty, Chief Executive Officer of the Modern Development Management Corporation (MDMC) a Liberian-owned contractor, who implemented the project, describes their service to refurbish the building as an opportunity to showcase what Liberian contractors are made of.

Mr. Youboty did not give the total cost of the project, but reveals that it was partially funded by both the Kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Morocco, which he highly acknowledges. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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FAO supports Liberia's first

Data Gap is a multi-agency partnership (World Bank, FAO and International Fund for Agricultural Development) for data smart agriculture to strengthen national agricultural data systems in 50 countries by year 2030. The program assists countries to produce agricultural survey data necessary to monitor international, regional (i.e.,

Agenda 2063; CAADP), and the national development agenda. In Liberia, the Government of Liberia officially launched the 50x2030 Initiative in May 2023 in partnership with FAO, World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) among others. Press Release

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"Buy From Women" Digital

others." Speaking in Voinjama, Ms. Giddings told the women that the platform has a unique record system that has helped rural women keep track and trend of their transactions.

The day-long awareness-raising activities in Voinjama City brought together several women farmers, potential entrepreneurs, local county officials among others where women farmers showcased their products. Beatrice Y. Smith from Stand forever Women Initiative, expressed satisfaction over the process and mentioned that the platform has helped to reduce post-harvest losses due to the involvement of third party individuals and groups in the sale of their products. She called on other women farmers and entrepreneurs to join them because the initiative has exposed them to the use of technology to sell their products.

VODWOPED Program Coordinator, Mawolo Daniels, highlighted that the "Buy from

Women" digital platform has provided the space for women farmers to experience an increase in their access to and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), which impacted women including their households, and their various communities through better sales. The sellers and buyers also use Orange Money to do their transactions on the platform. This has increased the number of users (especially women) of Orange Money in Voinjama and other parts of Lofa.

The market day event was also earlier held in Bong and Nimba counties with the objective of increasing visibility of the platform. The aim is to reach more women farmers and entrepreneurs and provide critical value addition to these initiatives, through networking and existing infrastructure around digital skills, digital and mobile technology, and digital/financial inclusion to ensure that rural women in Liberia are not left behind.

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Français

L'UP sent l'odeur du rat et retire sa plainte contre Koffa

Il semble que les responsables du futur parti au pouvoir, l'Unity Party, ont senti le risque de répercussions de leur poursuite contre le nouveau Président de l'Assemblée, Fonati Koffa,

après l'échec de son candidat à la présidence de la Chambre des représentants, M. Richard Nagbe Koon, face à Koffa.

L'UP a déposé une requête en jugement déclaratoire contre Cllr. Koffa à la Cour de droit civil concernant sa prétendue double

judiciaire.

Plus tôt dans sa requête en jugement déclaratoire déposée par son président national, le Rév. J. Luther Tarpeh, le secrétaire général national Amos Tweh et tous les autres responsables de l'UP, le demandeur affirmait que Cllr. Koffa est citoyen des États-Unis d'Amérique.

L'UP a exhorté le tribunal à annuler l'élection de Koffa en tant que représentant du district électoral 2 du comté de Grand Kru.

Le parti avait cité plusieurs dispositions pour étayer sa contestation de la citoyenneté de Koffa, notamment la loi sur les étrangers et la nationalité relative à la citoyenneté et à la restauration du droit de citoyenneté.

L'UP avait fait valoir que l'article 4, section 1, de la loi sur les étrangers et la nationalité stipule qu'un citoyen libérien qui détient la citoyenneté d'un autre pays ne peut pas être éligible à une fonction publique élective tout en restant citoyen d'un autre pays.

Il avait ajouté que si une telle personne souhaite se porter candidate à une fonction publique, elle doit renoncer à la citoyenneté de l'autre pays au moins un an avant de demander à la Commission électorale nationale (CEN) de se porter candidate à une

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dont la citoyenneté est contestée. Ils ont dû retirer leur plainte moins de 48 heures après.

L'UP a retiré mercredi sa plainte devant la Cour de droit civil visant à remettre en question la citoyenneté du Président de la Chambre Koffa.

Le parti d'opposition, qui doit accéder au pouvoir le 22 janvier 2024, s'est tourné vers la Cour de droit civil

citoyenneté.

Dans son avis de retrait à la Cour de droit civil daté du mercredi 17 janvier 2024, le parti d'opposition a informé le tribunal de sa décision de retirer l'affaire.

"Veuillez prendre acte et consigner au dossier de ce tribunal que le demandeur dans la cause susmentionnée a retiré sa requête en jugement déclaratoire ce jour-là, avec réserve", indiquait l'avis

L'UP clarifie le rapport de collecte de fonds

La présidente du Parti Uni dans le comté de Margibi a clarifié que la décision du comité inaugural de l'UP de solliciter une assistance financière pour le programme d'investissement du président élu, Joseph Boakai, a été prise avant l'intervention du président élu qui a demandé de mettre fin à l'opération.

Le NEW DAWN a obtenu une copie d'une communication officielle du bureau du secrétaire général de l'UP dans le comté de Margibi, sous les signatures de la présidente du comté Cecelia K. Doe, la présidente du programme d'investissement, Mme Harrisona Tomah Grigsgby Grimes, le Dr Nancy T. Freeman, personne focal; et le surintendant de Margibi, Jerry O. Varnie, avec le cachet officiel du secrétaire général de l'UP dans le comté, sollicitant une

assistance financière auprès des entreprises et institutions pour le programme d'investissement à venir.

Un extrait de la communication indique : "Le comté de Margibi célébrera l'inauguration de Joseph Nyumah Boakai et du sénateur Jeremiah Kpang Koung, président et vice-président élu le 22 janvier 2024, dans les différents districts politiques du comté de Margibi, en mettant l'accent sur Kakata. Avec cela, nous demandons

aimablement à votre institution/entreprise de bien vouloir nous aider financièrement pour faire de ce jour un succès dans le comté de Margibi."

Mais la direction du comté de l'UP a affirmé n'avoir reçu aucun centime d'une autre personne en dehors de l'argent alloué par le président élu, qui devrait être disponible le 18 janvier 2024.

Madame Cecelia K. Doe a affirmé que bien que la

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Éditorial

Les lamentations de la vice-présidente Taylor sur du lait versé

Les récentes révélations de la vice-présidente sortante Jewel Howard-Taylor sur les traitements qu'elle aurait subis au sein du gouvernement de la coalition du président George Manneh Weah, qu'elle a servi pendant six ans, ne sont rien d'autre que des lamentations sur du lait versé.

Comment une femme de son statut a-t-elle pu permettre de subir une telle humiliation psychologique sans réagir ?

Pourtant, elle a été assez courageuse pour défendre publiquement le CDC et critiquer à plusieurs reprises l'ancien vice-président, maintenant président élu, Joseph Nyumah Boakai, pour sa performance médiocre sous Madame Sirleaf. La même chose qu'elle disait de l'autre s'est retournée contre elle.

Madame Taylor a conduit le Parti patriotique national (NPP) au sein du Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) du président Weah dans le cadre d'une coalition qui a fait d'elle vice-présidente à l'issue des élections de 2017. Mais elle a été négligée après l'accession au pouvoir du CDC.

Au cours de la première année de l'administration, elle n'a pas repris son travail au Sénat qu'elle préside, car le palais présidentiel a retiré ses collaborateurs officiels et son cortège officiel, invoquant des allégations et des craintes au sein du parti au pouvoir selon lesquelles elle voulait éclipser le président Weah. La pression publique a été nécessaire pour que ses avantages soient rétablis.

Lors d'une émission en direct sur Internet récemment, la vice-présidente a déploré qu'elle n'ait jamais eu accès au cercle intérieur de l'administration Weah malgré son statut de deuxième commandant, tandis que sa valeur en termes d'éducation et d'expérience était minimisée dans le gouvernement. Comment cela peut-il attirer l'attention du public alors qu'elle est déjà sur le départ pour laisser place à une nouvelle administration ? La Coalition for Democratic Change a perdu le second tour de l'élection présidentielle du 14 novembre 2023 au profit de l'Unity Party, contrecarrant clairement la tentative du président Weah de briguer un second mandat.

Mais le fait qu'une femme qui a déjà été première dame de la République du Liberia avant d'être élue vice-présidente endure une telle humiliation pendant six longues années dans un silence total, est non seulement une déception sérieuse pour elle-même, mais aussi pour les femmes libériennes aspirant à des fonctions publiques.

Par ses révélations, Madame Taylor indique clairement qu'elle a été complètement mise à l'écart. Ce n'est donc pas étonnant que les appels à l'emploi au sein de la faction NPP soient restés sans réponse, car elle n'avait aucune influence sur le président Weah ou les principaux responsables pour faire valoir ses intérêts, et elle ne pouvait pas le dire publiquement.

"À un certain moment, j'ai été bloquée ; je ne faisais plus partie de l'équipe. En 2016-2017, j'ai fait partie de l'équipe ; nous nous sommes assis autour de la table pour discuter, et il (le président Weah) me demandait à la fin de chaque conversation de parler, 'Deputy SB, qu'en dis-tu,' et j'avais toujours la chance de dire ce que je pensais."

Mais elle a observé que tout cela a changé par la suite, et elle a été de plus en plus ostracisée au sein de la Coalition, regrettant "Ce manque de communication et de consultation a réellement atteint ma personne. Si je pouvais revenir en arrière, je dirais que c'était la partie la plus difficile pour moi. En tant que femme, vous savez, nous aimons parler. Et donc, j'ai toujours voulu avoir l'opportunité de parler de certaines des choses qui se passaient. Et j'ai toujours voulu dire que le président Weah et moi n'avions jamais eu d'échanges en face à face ; jamais."

Le fait de s'exprimer maintenant à la onzième heure est, comme on le dit souvent en parlant libérien, "de l'eau sous le pont" qui n'a pas une grande pertinence pour le moment. Tout ce qui lui reste maintenant, c'est de continuer sa vie après le 22 janvier.

Français

L'UP sent l'odeur du

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fonction publique élective. Il avait noté que la preuve documentaire d'une telle renonciation à la citoyenneté de l'autre pays doit être déposée auprès d'un tribunal de circuit au Libéria et auprès de la CEN au moins un an avant la demande à la CEN pour se porter candidate à la fonction publique élective.

L'UP s'était plaint que le Président Koffa est citoyen des États-Unis d'Amérique et qu'il détient un passeport valide.

Il avait soutenu que le Président Koffa n'est pas qualifié pour occuper une fonction élue en vertu des lois libériennes, faisant référence à son prétendu numéro de passeport "489973788", censé avoir été délivré le 13 février 2012.

L'UP avait impliqué la CEN dans l'affaire, arguant que la maison électorale ou le premier répondant dans l'affaire, conformément à la Constitution du Libéria, a

organisé une élection présidentielle et législative à la suite de laquelle Cllr. Koffa a été dûment élu et certifié par la CEN.

Avant le retrait de la plainte de l'UP, le juge désigné de la Cour de droit civil avait ordonné le lundi 15 janvier 2024 au greffier M. Victor G. Gailor de délivrer un mandat de citation à Koffa pour comparaître et répondre à la requête en jugement déclaratoire déposée contre lui.

"Vous êtes par la présente commandé de citer les défendeurs dans la cause susmentionnée, la Commission électorale nationale, premier répondant, et Cllr. J. Fointa Koffa, deuxième répondant, de comparaître devant ce tribunal pour répondre à la requête des demandeurs dans la cause susmentionnée", indiquait le mandat.

Le juge avait précisé que en cas de non-comparution des répondants, un jugement par défaut aurait été rendu contre eux.

Starts from page 8 L'UP clarifie le rapport

décision ait été prise et que des lettres aient été écrites, ils n'ont pas reçu un centime de qui que ce soit lorsque Boakai a mis fin au processus.

Selon Madame Doe, qui a parlé à notre journaliste par téléphone portable le mercredi 17 janvier 2024, ils (les responsables de l'UP à Margibi) ont pris la décision de solliciter des fonds pour l'investissement avant le retour de M. Boakai des États-Unis.

Elle a insisté sur le fait que le président élu a mis fin au processus et annulé toutes les autres activités de collecte de fonds pour dans le comté, sans la participation de la direction nationale de l'UP.

Elle a précisé également qu'ils ont pris la décision lors d'une réunion du 29 décembre 2023, après la première réunion tenue le 11 décembre 2023, à un moment où leurs termes de référence n'avaient pas encore été établis.

Madame Cecelia K. Doe, présidente de l'Unity Party à Margibi, a raconté : "On nous a donné un mandat en décembre avant même Noël, et le 11, nous avons eu notre première réunion à la mairie. Le comité qui nous avait été donné, les noms qui nous avaient été donnés pour travailler avec le

surintendant, le maire de la ville, les partis collaborateurs, un représentant de là-bas. Le comité de sept membres s'est réuni avant même que le Dr Freeman ne se joigne à nous. C'est sur cette base que nous sommes allés dans notre salle de comité, sans savoir que le président élu allait faire une déclaration selon laquelle il allait financer le processus."

Elle a souligné qu'à leur niveau dans le comté, ils ont seulement cherché un moyen de lever de l'argent pour leur propre portion d'investissement, sans savoir que le président élu et la direction nationale du parti allaient mettre des fonds à disposition pour le processus.

Elle a ajouté qu'ils devraient recevoir l'argent alloué par le président élu Boakai le 18 janvier 2024, mais ne pouvait pas confirmer un montant spécifique.

Une source de l'UP dans le comté a laissé entendre qu'ils mettront à disposition 5 000 dollars américains, tandis qu'une autre a indiqué que 2 500 dollars américains sont alloués par district.

Le président élu Joseph Boakai et le vice-président élu, Jeremiah Kpan Koung, doivent être investis le lundi 22 janvier 2024.

Whapoe empêché de participer à la retraite de l'UP



Dr. Jeremiah Z. Whapoe

Le candidat à la présidence du Parti Vision pour la Transformation du Libéria (VOLT), le Dr Jeremiah Z. Whapoe, aurait été empêché de participer à la retraite de l'Unity Party à Tubmanburg, comté de Bomi. Le Dr Whapoe aurait été invité par le président élu Joseph Nyumah Boakai à participer à la retraite de l'UP dans sa résidence dans le comté de Bomi. Cependant, il est rapporté que le leader politique de VOLT a été empêché par certains cadres du parti qui prétendaient qu'il était venu prendre leurs emplois.

Le journal NewDawn a été informé que le secrétaire général de l'UP, Amos Tweh, Madame MacDella Cooper et d'autres cadres du parti étaient apparemment les principaux responsables de l'opposition à la participation de Whapoe à la retraite. Madame Cooper dirige le parti politique Movement for One Liberia (MOL) et est une fervente partisane de l'ambassadeur Boakai. Elle est également membre exécutif des partis politiques d'opposition regroupés

sous le nom d'UP Alliance qui ont soutenu la candidature présidentielle de l'UP en 2023.

Notre équipe d'enquête a appris que la majorité des membres exécutifs de l'UP Alliance ont apparemment demandé au Dr Whapoe de quitter la salle car ils n'ont pas obtenu le soutien dont ils avaient besoin de sa part pendant l'élection. Avant que Boakai ne choisisse son colistier, Whapoe était l'un des leaders de l'opposition proche du leader de l'Unity Party. Whapoe a participé à l'élection présidentielle du 10 octobre 2023, mais il a déclaré son soutien à Boakai le 12 novembre 2023 pour le second tour du 14 novembre.

Suite à la victoire de Boakai, la direction de l'Unity Party Alliance a suspendu l'adhésion du parti VOLT du Dr Whapoe en raison de problèmes que le

parti avait avec l'UP. Selon l'UP Alliance, il y a eu une rencontre avec certains membres de l'UP concernant VOLT qui semblait avoir été très sérieuse et qui demandait une réponse urgente de la part de la direction de l'Alliance. Ce journal n'est pas au courant si ces problèmes n'ont pas été résolus.

Dans une interview téléphonique accordée à ce journal le mercredi 17 janvier 2024, le secrétaire général de l'UP, Amos Tweh, a déclaré qu'à aucun moment le Dr Whapoe n'avait été empêché d'entrer dans la salle de la retraite. M. Tweh a également nié avoir qualifié le Dr Whapoe d'individu venu prendre leurs emplois, affirmant qu'il avait été invité par le candidat à la présidence pour une conversation privée.

"À ma connaissance, Whapoe n'a jamais été expulsé de la retraite parce qu'il était venu prendre nos emplois.

Formation sur la collecte de données sur les droits de l'homme en Afrique de l'Ouest ouverte à Monrovia



21 défenseurs de base et activistes de première ligne en Afrique de l'Ouest se réunissent au Libéria cette semaine pour une formation de trois jours sur la collecte de données afin de documenter les attaques de représailles contre les défenseurs de la région.

La formation, qui débute le mercredi 17 janvier et se poursuit jusqu'au 19 janvier, est organisée par Green Advocates International et la Plateforme de gouvernance des droits des ressources naturelles de la Société civile de l'Union du fleuve Mano, un réseau de défenseurs de la terre et de l'environnement en Afrique de l'Ouest.

L'atelier vise à doter les collecteurs de données des seize pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest des connaissances, des compétences et des outils nécessaires pour surveiller, documenter et traiter de manière efficace le sous-signalement aigu des abus contre les défenseurs de première ligne dans les communautés autochtones.

Avec le soutien de la Coalition internationale pour la terre, du Centre des ressources sur les droits de l'homme des entreprises et de Global Witness, la formation renforcera la compréhension des collecteurs de données sur les protocoles des droits de l'homme, les méthodologies de surveillance et les techniques de documentation des violations, contribuant ainsi à la promotion et à la protection des défenseurs de la région.

Le Représentant pays du Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies aux droits de l'homme (HCDH), M. Christian Mukosa,

devrait s'adresser aux participants à l'ouverture de la formation le mercredi, à l'hôtel Corina sur le boulevard Tubman à partir de 9 heures.

Les organisations internationales de collecte de données n'ont pas pu couvrir pleinement l'Afrique dans son ensemble. En conséquence, les défenseurs sont victimes de violations/meurtres non documentés. En 2021, le réseau a lancé l'Annuaire des défenseurs de base en Afrique de l'Ouest pour répondre au sous-signalement aigu des attaques contre les défenseurs après une évaluation complète des bases.

Le rapport d'évaluation des bases a révélé un compte rendu accablant des conditions des défenseurs des droits de l'homme (HRD) dans la région, déclarant un sous-signalement aigu des attaques de représailles contre les défenseurs, principalement dans les communautés de première ligne luttant contre les crises foncières, environnementales et climatiques.

Un communiqué cite le coordinateur, Peter Quaqua, disant que les défenseurs ont souffert de décennies d'abus de la part de leurs propres gouvernements et des sociétés transnationales opérant dans la région, avec très peu ou pas d'attention portée à leur situation.

Il a remercié les organisations de soutien et a déclaré que le projet est une tentative de raconter l'histoire africaine et de relever le profil des défenseurs peu connus qui travaillent pour protéger la planète.

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ARTICLE

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Murder In Liberia: Court Verdict And Other Actions In The Death Of Charloe Musu

By Dagbayonoh Kiah Nyanfore

This is a continuation of the updates on the Charloe Musu murder case. In June 2023, this writer reported the arrest of Cllr. Gloria Scott and three co-defendants for the killing. The co-defendants and Charloe lived with Scott in her Brewerville home in Virginia, Montserrado County, Liberia. This report discusses the verdict.

On December 21, 2023, the jurors in the Charloe Musu murder case found former Liberian Chief Justice Gloria Musu Scott and three co-defenders guilty of murdering Charloe. On Tuesday, January 9, 2024, Criminal Court C sentenced the Defendants to life in prison. The Defense lawyers intend to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

Charloe Musu, a 23 year-old college student pictured above, was murdered on February 22, 2023 in the house of Cllr. Gloria Musu Scott, who is her traditional African mother. She had lived with the counselor since childhood. According to an autopsy, Charloe was stabbed multiple times. The mother reported to the police that an intruder killed the victim. Scott also reported using pepper spray on the intruder before he escaped. Besides being an ex-Supreme Court Chief Justice, Madam Scott is a renounced lawyer, a former senator, justice minister, and Liberian National Elections Commission Chair.

On June 21, 2023, the Liberian National Police (LNP), through the Justice Ministry, arrested Mrs. Scott, Gertrude Newton, Alice Johnson, and Rebecca Youdeh Wisers "for murder, criminal conspiracy, and false reports to law enforcement officials regarding Charloe Musu. On June 22, LNP detailed the arrest, indicating that there was no intruder into the house by their investigations. That the Defendants killed the deceased, conspired, and reported to LNP that an intruder murdered the victim." As the above photo shows, the counselor and her family lived in a high fence compound, which professional security men guarded. Also, dogs were protecting the yard. Hence, it would be difficult for an intruder to enter and, after being pepper sprayed, escape from the place.

The arrest received political reactions. Liberian former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf viewed the arrest "as a sad day and said the Liberia's Justice System has reverted to the bad ways of the past." Counselor Tiawan Gongloe, a 2023 presidential candidate, called the LNP's action "unfair and unfortunate". Cllr. Jerome Verdier, former chairman of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, alleged that "Monrovia City Mayor Jefferson Kojjee of having masterminded the murder carried out by Varlee Telleh," an employee of the city.

Further investigation cleared Kojjee and Telleh. However, other Liberians happily expressed that the government finally took action on the case.

The politicization of the case continued during the four-month trial. Immediately after the November 2023 presidential election, Patrick Honnah, Punch Radio CEO, proclaimed that Cllr. Scott would be free now that Ambassador Joseph Boakai has won the election. She was once a Unity Party partisan and later a legal advisor for the Liberty Party. The two political institutions were of the opposition in the election. Seemingly, the opposition viewed the case politically; they believed that the ruling CDC government was prosecuting Scott unjustly.

Before the arrest, a group of Liberian females dressed in black demonstrated at the ground of the Capitol Building, supporting Cllr. Scott. Meanwhile, Front Page Africa, a newspaper, had reported that there was friction between the LNP and the justice ministry regarding the murder. Accordingly, LNP "want[ed] to charge Cllr. Scott with the crime of murder, but Justice Minister Frank Musa Dean reportedly opposed that decision and called [ed] for a lesser charge of manslaughter or negligent homicide." But some Liberians peacefully protested before the ministry and called on the minister not to halt justice.

Also, know that a few months before the killing, Madam Scott reported to the police two rubbery attempts at her compound. According to her, the police did nothing. It was alleged that immediately after the stabbing, she drove to the home of Minister Dean and informed the minister. Dean advised her to change her phone number. Scott did not, and neither did anyone else, take Charloe to the hospital until the following day, about 7 hours after. Some analysts viewed that Charloe's life would have been saved had someone taken her quickly to the hospital.

The Defendants hired a team of over 30 lawyers considered "some of the best legal minds in Liberia." It included retired associate Supreme Court judges and Cllr. Augustine Fayiah, the group lead lawyer. The persecution team included Cllr. Lafayette B. Gould, an experienced lawyer.

The Defense argued that the persecution failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the Defendants committed the crime. The State maintained that there was no intruder into the house and that a security guard came to the house upon hearing "a crying sound coming from

inside the house" and found the deceased's body in co-defendant Scott's private bathroom with bloodstains. Her living quarter is separated from the general quarter with a secured bar. Moreover, the victim's face is said to have "a foreign substance believed to be a pepper spray," which collaborates with Scott's earlier statement that she discharged pepper spray."

The court granted the Defense request to bring its own pathologist to conduct a second autopsy. The Defense employed Dr. Mathias Okoye, a Nigerian-born pathologist who practices in the US. Accordingly, his finding alleges that a DNA sample from Charloe's fingernails showed that a male intruder committed the murder, contrary to the first autopsy performed by a team of Liberian pathologists headed by Dr. Benedict Kolee, chief pathologist at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Liberia. The Kolee group's examination claims that a female did the killing. On the witness stand, both pathologists debunked each other. The State produced 20 witnesses while the Defense had 11, including Cllr. Scott.

On December 21, 2023, the jurors visited the crime scene. They saw the bloodstains in the bathroom, the fortification of the house, and other conditions. Apparently, the Defendants vacated the premises intact after the incident. A few days after, the Persecution and the Defense rested their case. There were 12 jurors, and 11 found the Defendants guilty. 1 disagreed. After the verdict, some jurors expressed that besides the evidence presented, the visit to the house helped convince them.



While some Liberians applauded the verdict, others did not, blaming the ruling on corruption and poverty. Africa Report indicates. "The justice system is seriously challenged, and all this is due to poverty. People with no means of income are randomly selected to serve as jurors and promised a huge amount of money to influence their judgment. It's a challenge to the rule of law, says Frances Johnson-Allison, one of Musu-Scott's lawyers, who also served as chief justice of Liberia's Supreme Court from 1996-1997."

Cllr. Gould viewed the case differently, saying that the State won by overwhelming evidence. According to the same Africa Report, he stated that as a drafter "of the indictment, my opinion was that people committed a crime and I was under obligation to present a piece of evidence to a panel of jurors to decide whether my case was right, so the jurors did exactly what the law required."

Specific facts are cleared in this case. Besides Scott, the Defendants are ordinary Liberians. The jurors are from Montserrado County, which Joseph Boakai, an opposition, won twice in the October and November presidential elections. Yet, neither the verdict was close or divided. It was overwhelmingly majority, thus removing the resembling of politics from the process.

As pointed out earlier, the defense lawyers said they would appeal to the Supreme Court. The court will open in March this year. A new trial will likely be held if the Supreme Court rules for the Defense. Other than that, the Defendants will serve the sentence unless the president grants them clemency. Had the jurors ruled for the Defense, the case would have ended entirely, and the Defendants would have been free because, by law, the State cannot appeal to the Supreme Court. While some observers think the high court could overturn the verdict considering Scott's past political positions or the president could grant clemency, others said such a move would discredit the high court and affect and weaken the presidency. Though the Constitution gives the president the power to free a convict, critics say criminals would willfully commit crimes and look to the president for clemency. This could encourage impunity, increase crimes, and create insecurity in the county.

However, the Maryland County ritualistic murder case of 1977 could be an example of a strong presidency for justice. Indeed, in that matter, the State arrested Maryland Superintendent James Anderson, County Representative Allen Yancy, and others for allegedly killing Moses Tweh, a Kru fisherman and famous local singer from Grandcress. The State claimed that the accused murdered Tweh for ritualistic sacrifice for political advancement. Anderson was said to have wanted to become an ambassador and Yancy to be a senator. Anderson was the son of Nathaniel Anderson, chairman of the ruling True Whig Party, and Yancy was the son of former Vice President Allen Yancy, Sr., and cousin of William Tubman, Liberia's past president. They were all Marylanders and powerful. Moreover, President Tubman selected sitting president William Tolbert as vice president in 1951. Tolbert loyally served under Tubman for over twenty years and became president upon Tubman's death in 1971.

The lower court found the defendants guilty, but the Supreme Court ruled for a new trial. However, the lower court ruled the Defendants guilty in the second trial. Chairman Anderson untiringly appealed to President Tolbert for clemency. The president refused and later spoke that he would not be influenced by sentiment in carrying out his "duty in the fear of God in keeping with the oath of office of the president."

CONTINUE NEXT EDITION

Was Boakai blindfolded? Preserve the peace

By Othello B. Garblah

The recent tour of the premises of Liberia Traffic Management Incorporated (LTMI), a Lebanese-owned entity with

concerning about Boakai's tour of LTMI facilities on Monday, January 15, was the presence of two former police directors: Chris Massaquoi and Gregory Coleman leading the

explained that LTMI would be responsible for the management of traffic vehicles while enforcement of traffic regulations would be done by the Liberia National

By Emmanuel wise Jipoh

Outgoing President George Manneh Weah urges the incoming Unity Party-led administration to adhere to democracy and preserve the nation's peace, ahead of the historic transfer of power that comes on Monday, January 22, 2024.

The incumbent Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)-led government is expected to hand over power to the UP-led administration following an epic election showdown last year.

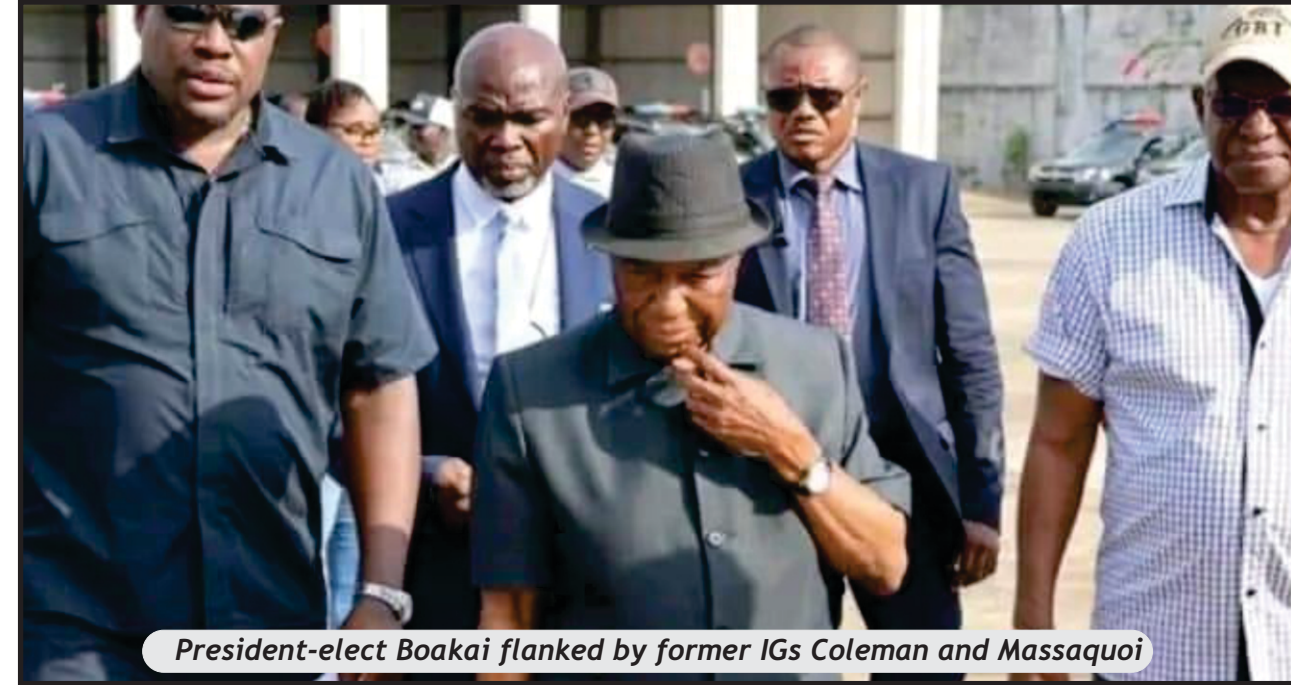
President Weah took global stage, when he conceded defeat to President-elect Joseph Nyumah Boakai, setting the stage for a historic transition, which has boosted the democracy of Liberia.

Speaking on Wednesday, 17 January at the dedicatory ceremony of the refurbished Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Monrovia, ahead of Monday's inaugural ceremony, President Weah hoped that the return of the UP administration at the helm of the Liberian

administration in allowing a historic concession which saw the CDC not going to court, was not because they did not believe in institutional mandate or the legal system, but was aimed at preserving peace.

He reflects that during his Presidency, his government was not interested in removing members of the opposition from key positions, but rather focusing on employing Liberians, specifically referencing current Deputy Minister for Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cllr. Deweh E. Gray, who served under former President Ellen Johnson and the Unity Party-led administration, but was retained in his government because of her service to the State.

Mr. Weah describes himself as one of the known celebrities in Liberia, but yet he is still being criticized for the work he has done. He further recalls that when he was Senator for Montserrado County, there was time he wanted to obtain Diplomatic Passports for his wife and children, but was denied by Minister Gray, who then guided him to follow the right



President-elect Boakai flanked by former IGs Coleman and Massaquoi

interest from some Liberians by President-elect Joseph N. Boakai has left tongues wagging.

Not just because of his physical presence, but also because Mr. Boakai's tour comes amid an ongoing legal dispute over the proposed Memorandum of Understanding of LTMI, which many continue to argue undermines the statutory functions of the Ministry of Transport and gifts LTMI a free ride to siphon the country's much-needed revenue for a work that is already being executed by the Ministry of Transport.

The Ministry of Transport was established in August 1987 by law and has the statutory mandate to administer all transport related functions including the issuance of vehicle license plates and driver's licenses in the country.

The Act also enables the Ministry to formulate and administer the transport, insurance, and maritime regulations and policies of Liberia. It has become one of the country's major revenue-generating agencies.

The ministry over the years has worked hand in hand with the Liberia National Police in ensuring the registration of vehicles and the issuance of driver's licenses.

However, the proposed LTMI MoU, which seeks to regulate and manage the country's traffic also seeks to assume the role of issuing vehicle registration plates and driver's licenses. This many have argued appears to usurp the function of the ministry, thereby raising security concerns about putting such function into the hands of a foreign company.

tour without the presence of any member of the current police hierarchy. This speaks volumes of these individuals' interests and apparent links to LTMI. The move also signaled how President-elect Boakai may have been blindfolded by them to tour LTMI amid ongoing litigation, one source close to the President-elect said.

It could be recalled that on January 31, 2022, the Government of Liberia and LTMI were expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at regulating the traffic system of the country.

The signing of the MOU and a launching program were scheduled to take place on the premises of LTMI in Paynesville, adjacent to the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex.

The program was initially intended to be held on Friday, 28 January 2022 at 10 am, but the ceremony was halted and postponed under unexplained circumstances.

Some authorities from the security sector including the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), among others, were already in attendance as guests when the program was halted.

The LTMI MoU indicates that when signed, Liberia will benefit from an improved traffic regulatory system, building the capacity of 500 Liberia National Police staff and creating over 1, 200 jobs for Liberians. But what it did not say is the percentage of the country's meager revenue it would be taking away.

The LTMI is a public-private partnership module, which is said to be working in over 50 countries around the world. Excerpts of the MoU

Police, a partnership that currently exists between the LNP and the Ministry of Transport.

According to the partnership documents, the LNP shall provide manpower and Technical Law Enforcement expertise and shall conduct road safety awareness support traffic management and road safety programs across the country.

What is equally concerning about the LTMI MoU is that it also seeks to assume part of state function wherein it seeks to provide uniforms for the Liberian national police as well as engage in the training of personnel of the Liberia National Police.

As was done with President-elect Boakai in April 2019, LTMI led officials of government to inspect fleets of police traffic vehicles and motorcycles which it said would have been used for effective road safety and traffic management.

Meanwhile, a statement released from the office of the President-elect Boakai, indicated that Boakai found that with the LMTI set-up, the nation will have a One-Stop shop for the processing of all instruments from driver's licenses, license plates, Roadworthiness inspections to insurance policies.

According to the office of the President-elect, the Traffic Enforcement Center has all the equipment ready for use and hoped that the legal hurdles surrounding the investment will be overcome so that the public will benefit from the just revenues of the investment.

"The issue of roads and road safety is a pillar of the Boakai administration under the ARREST manifesto" the office of the President-elect stated.



Presidency would preserve the peace that he has kept by conceding defeat and allowing an historic transition.

He said this was most important rather than sticking to power that could have allowed killings and bloodshed, destroying innocent lives. President Weah reiterates that the decision of the outgoing CDC administration to narrowly accept defeat in the election and proceed with the transfer of power peacefully is in adherence to keeping the peace of Liberia to move the country forward and allow everyone to enjoy.

He expresses excitement that his administration is abiding with protocols, and proceeding with a smooth transition, saying "We are very excited, and pray and hope in our transition, even the government that's coming back, because they are the same government we took off, should know that the peace of this country is important than anyone of us."

The President says the decision that was taken by his

procedure in acquiring such passport. "I hope I get this story right; just to prove who we are and not what they said we are", the President noted, recalling that he had called Madam Gray to issue passport for his family, as a Senator for Montserrado County, but was told only the President could issue a diplomatic passport, when some of his colleagues would had resisted and insisted they be issued a diplomatic passport, but he defaulted only because Madam Gray was doing her job.

Mr. Weah said he did not obtain the Diplomatic Passport until he became President, and had the opportunity to replace Madam Gray as Deputy Minister, but didn't do so just because she had rejected or denied him. "I did not remove Madam Gray because she was doing her job; we did not come to remove Unity Party partisans, but came to employ Liberians, and that is while you see Madam Gray kept still on her job, so we pray that this administration will preserve the peace, he cautions. Editing by Jonathan Browne

This is laudable and worthy of praise

-Weah describes refurbished Foreign Ministry building

By Emmanuel wise Jipoh
 Outgoing President George Manneh Weah has described the newly refurbished Ministry of Foreign Affairs building as



dedicates a high level of patriotism and commitment of his government to the Liberian people, ensuring a smooth continuation in governance. The President commends

dedicated services by the level of work done so far in a short three-year period they have served.

President Weah reiterates that Minister Kemayah and his team duly understood the philosophy of former United States President John F. Kennedy, who once said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

He notes Kemayah and his team have truly exemplified this philosophy of President Kennedy by the level of work done so far at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Weah says if Liberians were to assist his government in a meaningful way like the refurbishing of the Foreign Affairs building, Liberia could rapidly developed, as their patriotic efforts could have been recognized. He urges Liberians to do whatever little they can to modernize the country, noting that Liberia has come too much of age to still be stunted at

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